

VZCZCXRO2218
RR RUEHDE
DE RUEHJM #0739 1211504
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1346
INFO RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 4106
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 8225
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4082
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0041

UNCLAS JERUSALEM 000739

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD
DUBAI FOR PELLETIER
LONDON FOR SREEBNY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [KINR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA ANALYSIS: Palestinian Media Downplays Role of
Factions in Provoking Israeli Military Operations

¶1. SUMMARY: Reporting on Palestinian-Israeli violence in the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian media typically relegates any provocative action by Palestinian militant factions to the background, focusing instead on Israeli actions and Palestinian deaths and injuries. The resulting coverage downplays Israeli deaths or injuries and leaves readers with the impression of unprovoked or excessive Israeli military operations. The April 9 attack by Palestinian gunmen on an Israeli fuel depot at Nahal Oz near the Gaza border and the subsequent Israeli military reaction illustrates this trend. END SUMMARY.

¶2. The Gaza Strip is daily front-page and top of the hour news material for the Palestinian press, with particular attention paid to Israeli operations and resulting Palestinian deaths. The lead headlines in all three print dailies routinely include the number of Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip by the Israeli military, but rarely mention provocative actions that precede Israeli operations.

NAHAL OZ ILLUSTRATES

¶3. On April 9, Palestinian gunmen raided the Nahal Oz Israeli fuel depot on the Israeli side of the Gaza border, killing two Israeli civilian guards. In response, the Israeli Air force struck Gaza, killing seven Palestinians, some militants and some children. The military wings of all three Palestinian factions claimed responsibility for the attack on Nahal Oz.

¶4. Palestinian media coverage reported on the Israeli military response and the resulting Palestinian deaths and injuries and left the initial Palestinian attack and the resulting Israeli deaths in the background. On April 10, both Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida dailies ran banner headlines declaring that "seven Palestinians were martyred and three Israelis killed" conflating several events into one. Articles in all the dailies highlighted that three children were among the Palestinian dead. The front pages showed photos of the wreckage of a car hit by an Israeli missile and a woman holding two children running for safety. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida incorrectly identified the two Israelis killed as soldiers and called the Palestinian gunmen "resistance fighters." In related reports, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida also claimed the violent events in Gaza could be traced back to the work of "resistance fighters" to "expose" an attempt by Israeli special forces to "creep into" an area in the eastern Gaza Strip, giving justification to the Nahal Oz attack. The Al-Quds lead story noted in its sub-headline that two Israelis were also killed and described the Israeli reaction as a "revenge shelling" on the Gaza Strip, but did not specify the cause.

¶5. The PA issued an official statement condemning the Palestinian factions for attacking Nahal Oz and accusing the gunmen of

undermining ongoing efforts to "alleviate the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza," and "intentionally giving the Israelis pretexts to close the crossings and cut the fuel supply" to Gaza. Al-Quds did not mention the PA statement, and Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida focused on the statement's call on Israel to avoiding harming Gazans and largely ignored the criticism of the Palestinian gunmen.

16. In its main editorial, Al-Quds directly linked the military escalation to the Palestinian attack on Nahal Oz, stating that the Israeli operation was a response to the Palestinian attack. The same editorial, though, was clear in expressing condemnation of the Israeli military reaction, maintaining that such reaction reflects "Israel's immense desire for revenge."

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